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3) US, DPRK hold direct dialogue, but when to resume six-party talks not yet fixed

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
November 29, 2006

Seiji Nishioka, Beijing

Of the member nations of the six-party talks to discuss the North Korean nuclear issue, the United States, China, and North Korea yesterday afternoon held an informal meeting at the Diaoyutai in Beijing and exchanged views on how to promote discussions once the six-party talks are resumed as well as specific goals. A bilateral dialogue between the US and the North was also held. The six-party talks, which have been suspended since November of last year, are likely to be restarted possibly in mid-December, but Chinese Foreign Ministry Deputy Press Officer Jiang revealed the timetable for the six-party talks to be restarted has yet to be set, telling the press: "The concerned nations are now engaged in consultations." The trilateral meeting among the US, China, and North Korea, and a bilateral one between the US and North Korea will continue today.

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The ongoing three-way talks of the chief delegates from the US, China, and North Korea followed the ones in which the three nations had agreed to resume the six-party talks.

North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan arrived at Beijing Airport yesterday morning. There, he stated he would attend talks as a nuclear power standing on an equal footing with the US.

Afterwards Kim headed for the Diaoyutai and there, he exchanged views with US Chief Delegate Christopher Hill, assistant secretary of state, and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister⁴ Wu Dawei, who chairs the six-party talks, while having lunch. Later, the US and North Ko²⁴Qlement, the lifting of America's financial sanctions against North Korea, and a timetable for resuming the six-party talks and other matters.

After the bilateral dialogue with the North, Hill referred to when to restart the six-party talks and stated it is planned to resume them in December, but that for that, progress is necessary. Japan's chief delegate, Kenichiro Sasae, director-general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry Asian and Oceanian Bureau late yesterday implied that consultations on when to resume the six-party talks ran into difficulties, noting: "At this point, I can't say anything."

Earlier in the day, Sasae met with South Korean Chief Delegate Chun Young Woo, director of the Diplomatic Policy of South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and reportedly he confirmed bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Sasae initially planned to return home on Nov. 28, but he extended his stay in order to look for a way-out of the abduction issue. He intends to try to make contact with his North Korean counterpart.

4) US-DPRK dialogue: Major gap over scrapping nuclear programs; North Korea seeks removal of US financial sanctions

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
November 29, 2006

By Shozo Nishioka in Beijing

Informal talks started in Beijing yesterday between the United States and North Korean delegates to the six-party talks, with discussions apparently focused on how to make actual progress in the talks, once they are restarted. However, North Korea, which has carried out a nuclear weapons test, seemed to have stressed a stance of it now being a "nuclear power," and at the same time, its delegate pressed the US for removal of financial sanctions. The gap between the DPRK and the US, which unconditionally demands the scrapping of the North's nuclear weapons programs, remained as wide as ever.

Although the contents of the meeting were not revealed, the US

delegation sought to confirm the DPRK's intention regarding scrapping its nuclear programs, and apparently asked the North to carry out the following steps leading to such: 1) halting and dismantling the nuclear facility at Yongbyon; 2) accepting IAEA inspections, etc.

The US side has been showing signs of a flexible position following

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the Republican Party's defeat in the midterm elections, with such statements by President Bush as, "If North Korea abolishes its nuclear programs, we can officially declare the Korean War is over." The US side has also pointed out that in order to restart the six-party talks this year, "We sense an urgency that we cannot let any more time be wasted" (source related to the talks).

In response, North Korea, having carried out a nuclear test, has been calling itself a "nuclear power" and taking a stance of seeking disarmament talks with the US.

5) Enactment of bills elevating JDA status likely in current Diet session

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
November 29, 2006

Bills upgrading the Defense Agency (JDA) to ministry status are likely to pass the House of Representatives tomorrow and be enacted in the current Diet session. The ruling coalition plans to take a vote on the bills in a meeting of the Lower House Security Council and a plenary session both to be held tomorrow. If the bills are enacted, the JDA will be transformed into a defense ministry possibly next January.

Senior Lower House Security Council members from the Liberal Democratic Party and Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) decided yesterday to take a vote on the bills after intensive deliberations on the three nonnuclear principles tomorrow morning and send the bills to a plenary session to be held in the afternoon. Foreign Minister Taro Aso and others will attend the deliberations.

The JDA is an external agency of the Cabinet Office, but the agency is elevated to a ministry, it will become possible to present bills independently. Overseas operations by the Self-Defense Force (SDF) will be upgraded from an ancillary mission to a main one.

6) Gov't to repackage economic incentives for Okinawa's northern districts; Progress in Futenma talks a precondition

ASAHI (Page 2) (Abridged)
November 29, 2006

The government decided yesterday to resume its package of economic development measures—which was once abolished in this May's cabinet decision—for Okinawa Prefecture's northern districts in connection with the planned relocation of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in the central Okinawa city of Ginowan to Cape Henoko in the island prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago, a focus of the realignment of US forces in Japan. The government plans to repackage abolished projects for the remaining three years, making it a precondition to see smooth progress in its Futenma relocation talks with Okinawa's base-hosting localities. To begin with, the government will earmark 10 billion yen to budget projects for next fiscal year. Minister of State for Okinawa Takaichi met with Okinawa Governor-elect Hirokazu Nakaima yesterday at the Cabinet Office and told him that the government would make positive efforts to repackage economic development measures. Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine also attended the meeting, in which they confirmed that the government would resume its consultative body's suspended talks with Okinawa's prefectural and municipal governments.

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However, the Defense Agency, which took the initiative to call off

the economic package, is still strongly dissatisfied with Okinawa's local governments because there was no progress in the relocation of Futenma airfield despite its budgetary spending of 70 billion yen from fiscal 2000. A senior official of the agency admitted that the government would continue to budget the package in fiscal 2007. However, the official added, "There's no guarantee of implementation for fiscal 2007 and 2008 if there's no progress in the relocation talks."

In addition to the package of economic development measures for Okinawa's northern districts, the Defense Agency is planning a new subsidization system for next fiscal year to allocate incentive subsidies for Okinawa's base-hosting localities according to progress in the Futenma relocation.

7) DFAA mulls subsidizing local events to proceed with US military realignment

ASAHI (Page 2) (Abridged)
November 29, 2006

The Defense Facilities Administration Agency is planning to subsidize base-hosting municipalities in the process of realigning US forces in Japan, officials said yesterday. The newly planned subsidization system is intended not only for hardware projects like constructing facilities but also for local events and other software projects, according to the officials. The DFAA will subsidize base-hosting localities according to progress in the planned realignment of US forces in Japan. In addition, the DFAA will also consider other local-requested software projects, thereby urging base-hosting localities to cooperate in the US military realignment.

8) DPJ okays collective self-defense in part

SANKEI (Page 1) (Abridged)
November 29, 2006

The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) yesterday released its governing policy plan ahead of next summer's election for the House of Councillors. In the area of foreign and security policies, the DPJ policy paper, referring to Japan's right to self-defense, says the DPJ will not stick to past arguments about the concepts of individual self-defense and collective self-defense. "Japan will only exercise its right to self-defense if and when there is an imminent incursion directly threatening Japan's peace and security," it says. With this, the DPJ came to approve an act that has been taken as exercising the constitutionally prohibited right of collective self-defense.

9) Minshuto drafts unified diplomatic and security policies; Ability to implement them remains unknown

SANKEI (Page 3) (Abridged)
November 29, 2006

The major opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) unveiled yesterday draft "administrative policy," which was compiled based on the so-called "Ozawa vision" presented by President Ichiro Ozawa during the September party presidential campaign. "Producing the party's basic policy has been our goal since the party was

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established," a senior Minshuto lawmaker said. It was significant that the party was able to reach a certain conclusion to its diplomatic and security policies, which have long lacked consistency. But to what extent the party, which aims for a change in government in collaboration with other parties, can implement this policy remains to be seen.

What is particularly noteworthy about the draft policy is that the party eyes allowing the country to partially exercise the right to collective self-defense. Minshuto, long dubbed a hotchpotch party, can be said to have made a pragmatic policy decision at long last.

Behind that decision lay the need for the party to overcome its

weakness with the Upper House election coming up next summer. For next year's election, Ozawa's strategy has been to make a clear distinction between his party and the government and the ruling coalition. But there is no denying that the party has been slighting its own unique policy because of such a strategy.

The draft plan is intended to make clear the party's policies, which have been left unaddressed to some extent. On the domestic front, the plan lists such steps as keeping the same consumption tax rate and creating child and multi-occupancy allowances that are likely to strike a chord with the public. But the plan stops short of mentioning specific means to raise funds for such measures.

The draft plan will serve as the basis for the party's manifesto (campaign pledges) for the next Upper House election as well as the foundation for its policy course in the event it grabs power.

10) Gist of Minshuto policy platform

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)
November 29, 2006

Education

7 Abolish the current system, in which educational administration is conducted by boards of education, and create a system, in which local heads will pursue educational administration in a responsible manner.

7 The state will guarantee the status, respect, and treatment of teachers.

7 Raise the educational spending to a level above the average of advanced counties (5% of GNP).

7 Raise compulsory education to include high school.

Social security

7 Create "multi-occupancy allowances" for households with parents.

7 Create "child allowances."

7 Keep the consumption tax rate at 5% and spend all the tax income for pensions (basic portion).

7 Unify all the pension programs to into a single program.

Diplomacy, security

7 Build a relationship of trust between Japan and the United States to make Japan America's equal partner.

7 Make every effort to forge relations of trust with Asian neighbors, including China and South Korea. The country will exercise the right of self-defense in limited situations, in which

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an imminent transgression directly threatens the peace and security of our country, in conformity with Article 9 of the Constitution on the basis of the principle of exclusively defense-oriented policy, without dwelling on the history of discussions on whether it is individual or collective self-defense.

7 The country will actively join UN peacekeeping activities.

Agriculture

7 Establish an income compensation system to pay the difference between the production cost and the market price to growers.

Decentralization, autonomy

7 Abolish individual subsidies in principle and provide local governments with subsidies including tax grants, in a package, as a revenue source.

Politics, administrative reform

7 Correct the disparity in the value of vote. Lower the voting age to 18. Promote Internet use.

7 Prohibit bureaucrats from attending Diet deliberations.

7 Review the special corporations, independent administrative

organizations, and related special accounts with the aim of abolishing them all.

11) Japan, Indonesia agree in principle on EPA

ASAHI (Page 11) (Excerpts)
November 29, 2006

Prime Minister Abe yesterday met with visiting Indonesian President Yudoyono at the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei). Both leaders agreed in principle to sign an economic partnership agreement (EPA) on imports and exports of agricultural products and acceptance of Indonesian nurses. Abe stressed, "I will extend further cooperation for an early enforcement of the pact." Yudoyono responded, "We must make efforts for a final agreement next year." He also expressed a positive stance toward a possible extension of the contract for Indonesia to provide liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Japan, which is to expire in 2011. Indonesia is Japan's 7th EPA partner.

Stable securing of natural resources aimed for

The EPA, on which the governments of the two countries agreed in principle, incorporated an arrangement on energy for the first time. The aim is for Japan to secure a stable supply of energy through the establishment of a regulation that values a long-term import contract. In response to intensifying competition to secure natural resources, the Japanese government is accelerating its resources diplomacy using EPAs. The agreement with Indonesia will likely set a model course for this strategy.

Indonesia is the largest LNG supplier to Japan, commanding one-fourth of its total LNG imports in fiscal 2005. However, the nation now finds it difficult to secure sufficient amounts for exports due to an increased domestic demand and outmoded production facilities. At present, six Japanese companies, including Kansai Electric Power and Osaka Gas, are under long-term contract with Indonesia's state-run company. However, the company has fall short of supplying the

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contracted amounts. It has even suggested the possibility of cutting supply by 50% with the renewal of the contracts close at hand in 2010 and 2011.

For this reason, in reaching the agreement this time, the two leaders confirmed that if the Indonesia government puts a restraint on exports of LNG in the future, it will notify the Japanese government of its decision and make sure it will give consideration so that the decision will have no impact on the existing contracts. The two leaders also agreed to press ahead with efforts to create an environment in which Japanese companies finds it easier to invest in natural resources-related facilities. Such efforts will include enhancing the transparency of a foreign capital regulation.

12) Bill amending Basic Education Law to secure Diet passage; Ruling camp gearing up voting on bill next week

ASAHI (Top Play) (Excerpts)
November 29, 2006

It is now certain that a bill amending the Basic Education Law, the top-priority issue for the Abe administration, will go through the current special Diet session. Firming up a policy of aiming for a roll call on the legislation at the Upper House Special Committee on the Basic Education Law next week, the ruling camp yesterday proposed to the opposition parties holding local public hearings. The opposition camp is calling for continuing deliberations on the legislation. However, since the ruling camp is determined to extend the Diet session if the deliberations on the bill are not over in time, the bill is now certain to secure Diet approval. The revision of the law is the first since 1947. Education will take on a stronger flavor of being controlled by the government with emphasis being shifted from individuality to public nature.

Government involvement will likely be strengthened

The amendment incorporates as goals of education items that attach

importance to its public nature, such as "cultivating an attitude of loving the nation and one's hometown," "nurturing rich sentiment and moral," and "cultivating an attitude of contributing to the development of society, based on public spirit." Education Minister Ibuki during yesterday's Upper House Special Committee meeting said, "We want to change local communities, teachers and homes, based on these goals."

The Special Committee is deliberating the bill almost every day for six hours a day on average. It will hold intensive deliberations tomorrow on such issues as the prearranged questions for government-hosted town meetings, omissions of required subjects at high schools and school bullying. Deliberations are expected to exceed 70 hours, which the ruling camp regards as the target needed before taking a vote.

For this reason, senior Diet policy officials of both chambers of the Houses, including LDP Diet Policy Committee Chairman Toshihiro Nikai, yesterday confirmed a policy of voting on the bill after general deliberations at the Upper House Special Committee with the presence of Prime Minister Abe on Dec. 7 so that it can be enacted at the Upper House plenary session on Dec. 8. The directors of the Upper House Special Committee of the ruling camp yesterday sounded out the opposition camp about the possibility of holding public hearings in four cities, such as Niigata and Tokushima, on Dec. 4.

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13) LDP now in stormy internal situation with postal rebels' return to the party

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
November 29, 2006

Of the 11 postal rebels who defected from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in opposition to the postal privatization bill last year, became independents, and have now been allowed to return to the party, six lawmakers, including Kosuke Hori, yesterday met the press apparently at the request of the party leadership. At the press conference, they explained that they had "not been opposed to privatization per se." Keiji Furuya stated that he had turned around to support the bill after the Lower House election, noting, "I've thus registered my accountability with the voters." Most of them commented that they would be able to obtain public understanding about their return to the LDP. On the other hand, during an LDP General Council session, criticism erupted of the conditions set by Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa for postal rebels to return to

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the party. The party is still in a stormy situation caused by the return issue. In fact, a group was officially formed by junior lawmakers opposed to their return to the party.

Those postal rebels insist that the problem of their opposition to the postal privatization bill was settled at a time when they turned around to favor the bill during the special Diet session in the fall of last year.

Instead of attending the press conference, Seiko Noda, one of the postal rebels, responded to questions from reporters while making her way through the Diet. She said: "During the special Diet session last year, I judged I must engage in political activities in a way to be flexible enough to accept public opinions. It was not a high hurdle for me to (vote for the privatization bill)." Hori, too, commented: "I think I passed a 'test of loyalty to the party,' for after the (Lower House) election, I said in an interview, 'I'll vote for the bill.'"

One condition set by Nakagawa was for postal rebels to "obtain public understanding about their return to the LDP" through press conferences or on other occasions. Shunichi Yamaguchi, who attended the press conference, stated: "There was little resistance in (my electoral district) about my declaration of favoring the privatization. Voters have understood my position." Hiroshi Moriyama, as well, indicated that he obtained public understanding in his constituency, noting, "I've strived to obtain understanding

from voters by holding mini-meetings in my electoral district."

Both sides critical of the party executives

At an LDP General Council meeting, criticism was centered on Secretary General Nakagawa, who had set the strict conditions for

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postal rebels to return to the party. One participant argued: "I had thought trouble could occur if much time was taken."

House of Councilors member Mahito Nakajima, elected in the Yamanashi Constituency where two lawmakers have defected from the LDP, snapped: "The secretary general did such a thing simply out of consideration for the media." Another attendee, as well, leveled a harsh criticism at Nakagawa over the case of Takeo Hiranuma, who did not submit a written pledge and is not being allowed to return to

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the LDP: "I can't understand the secretary general's attitude. Because of his dictatorship, Mr. Hiranuma was forced to leave the party."

At a press conference after the meeting, General Council Chairman Yuya Niwa emphasized, "The important thing is to manage the party without leaving any ill feelings among the party members." But another attendee who has served in the three top party posts made this comment: "The prime minister, too, tarnished his image. Should his approval ratings drop, the party's unity would become loose."

In contrast to the General Council, one-term lawmakers directed their criticism at the party executives' decision to allow postal rebels to return to the party.

The inaugural meeting of the Forum to Think about Postal Rebels' Return to the LDP was attended by 17 freshmen lawmakers. The criticism voiced in the meeting was that: "There is the gap in sensibility between the party executives and us. If we leave this situation unattended, we'll be given up by the public."

The return of 11 postal rebels to the party in a way was in a way an established conclusion. One attendee grumbled: "I'm afraid that the inaugural meeting may end up as the last meeting...."

14) Postal rebels collect far more political funds than "Koizumi children" candidates in 2005

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
November 29, 2006

The average income of the 82 "Koizumi children" candidates in the general elections last year was 40.04 million yen, far lower than the 62.32 million yen in average income earned by all the lawmakers.

In the House of Representatives election last year, former Posts and Telecommunications Minister Seiko Noda engaged in a fierce battle with Yukari Sato, who was sent in the Gifu No. 1 District by the LDP as an "assassin" candidate to take on Noda, who had voted against the postal bill. Noda won the election but was forced out of the party. Following this, the LDP Gifu Prefecture First District Branch Office was dissolved, so its income decreased by more than 8 million yen below the previous year to 38.37 million yen. But Noda collected 59.4 million yen owing to significantly increased donations from individuals to the fund management organization. This figure is four times more than the previous year.

Meanwhile, in the case of Sato, who won a seat through the proportional representation segment, her fund-management organization reported no income for 2005. At the LDP branch office, 33.02 million yen was collected, but 20 million yen came from the party as subsidies and 10 million yen from the Yamasaki faction and others as donations.

SCHIEFFER